

Christmas

John 1:1-14 (KJV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The same was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life; and the life was the light of men. **5** And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. **6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. **8** He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. **9** That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. **11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not. **12** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **13** Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. **14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Christmas is such a joyous time, isn't it? Families and friends from all around the world come together to celebrate and catch up with each other. Everyone seems to be at peace, forgetting about this year's struggles and enjoying the company of our loved ones. It's a true shame that this feeling doesn't last all year long. The good will and nature of people during this time is just a small example of the love that God created us to have.

If we truly understood what Christmas was all about, then these feelings would last a lifetime. If we had proper understanding of God's plan for mankind, then we would realize the enormity of the gift that we celebrate today.

We would understand that Christmas is a part of a much larger story, a story that spans all of time as we know it.

For many of us, there's great comfort in coming to church on this day. When we sing and worship the God of our salvation, we are reminded of the joyous events that took place so long ago.

We hear about how a child was born in the lowest of conditions in a small country village on the far side of the world to Joseph's virgin wife, Mary. We hear the story of how the shepherds were confronted by an angel from God who announced to them the royal birth and how the whole night sky was filled with the angels proclaiming the birth of this child. We read of the men from the east who travelled so far, following a star, just to lay gifts at the feet of the king.

It's estimated that in the whole span of human history there have been approximately 108,000,000,000,000 people born. Out of all those births, only one was born to save the world from sin and death through God's gift of love.

God considers each of His children special, but this one child was different. Throughout history, there has never been a more momentous even than the birth of the Messiah.

This child is the most important part of God's plan. He came at just the right time at the right place for just the right reason. This child's birth was a pivotal event in history. Time, as we know it, is measured from His birth. Despite what historians would like to say, this day reminds us of God's love for His creation.

John 3:16 (KJV)

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God knew that mankind would turn away from Him before mankind did. He knew, because He gave man the ability to make decisions. He knew that we would fall to sin under our own strength.

Yes, He could have created us without the freedom to think for ourselves and to follow blindly, but what would that do for Him? We'd just be robots, not truly appreciating His greatness.

So, time after time, God urges us to return to Him, but each time we are led astray by our own desires, until at just the right time we realize that He's our best interest. God sent His only begotten son to die for our sins on the cross. Jesus Christ came into a sin filled world perfect, was tempted in every fashion, lived a perfect life, and was sacrificed as the spotless lamb whose blood covers and washes away our sins for ever and ever.

This plan was not made in the spur of a moment; it had always been God's plan. We know this, because we can read the prophecies concerning our savior.

Luke 1:26-27 (KJV)

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, **27** To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Approximately 700 years before Gabriel was sent, Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 7:14 (KJV)

14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Gabriel said:

Luke 1:30-33 (KJV)

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. **31** And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. **32** He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: **33** And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, after being spoken to by an Angel, took Mary to be his wife. After some months passed, Caesar Augustus decreed that a census should be taken over all the Roman empire to register each citizen. This required that they return to their ancestral towns, which is dependent upon whose bloodline they were from.

Joseph being descendant of David, went with Mary, now heavily pregnant, to the town of Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ. About 700 years prior to Jesus' birth, the prophet Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, wrote:

Micah 5:2 (KJV)

2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

I'd like to consider the two groups of people who came to see Jesus as an infant.

The Shepherds:

1. Were hard working.
2. Weren't well educated.
3. Weren't well payed.
4. Weren't the elite of Israel.
5. Weren't those who should have known the scriptures well; simple folk.

Then one day, on the hills outside of Bethlehem, an angel appeared.

Luke 2:9-14 (KJV)

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. **10** And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. **12** And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, **14** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

The Shepherds didn't say, "Oh, we can't go... We can't leave our sheep... We have to work... What if wolves come and attack while we're gone..."

No. They left their flocks and hastened to find this child.

The Wise men:

1. Were the elite of the ruling class from a country far to the east.
2. Were used to searching the night sky to note changes they saw.
 - a. They were searching for signs from God.

And one day they saw a special star rise. They knew it was a sign of something extraordinary. They knew that it was the sign of a long promised king.

They knew that:

Numbers 24:17 (KJV)

17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

Their reaction? They followed the signs of the Christ child. They left their comfortable homes, traveled by camel, and followed the star until they came to the place where the child lay. It's assumed that by time they reached Bethlehem, Jesus was about a year old.

Matthew 2:11 (KJV)

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

Why did these men travel so far and search so diligently for Jesus? They knew that there was something special about Jesus.

So, what about you? Are you going to be like the wise men and the shepherds? Are you going to search high and low for Him? He is here, you just need to bow at His feet and acknowledge that you need Him right now. Jesus Christ is the greatest Christmas present ever.

Jesus Christ's birth was just one step in God's almighty plan. Hasten, He is calling you today. Don't let this opportunity pass, bow and accept the gift!